

## Message Text

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13

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9418

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 2586

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV PROP CH

SUBJECT: THE LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE IN CHINA

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

THE CAMPAIGN TO CRITICIZE THE "RIGHT DEVIATIONIST WIND" AIMED AT VICE PREMIER TENG HSIAO-PING AND HIS SUPPORTERS HAS BEEN GROWING IN INTENSITY SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN EARLY FEBRUARY. IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT IN THE COMING MONTHS CHINA WILL BE GOING THROUGH A PERIOD OF POLITICAL TURMOIL AND UNCERTAINTY. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR OUR ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AS THEY EMERGE AND, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, DEFINE WHAT WE WILL BE LOOKING FOR AS INDICATORS OF THE PROBABLE COURSE OF THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN CHINA.

### 2. THE CAMPAIGN THUS FAR

AS IT HAS DEVELOPED OVER THE PAST MONTH, THE CAMPAIGN HAS GIVEN THE APPEARANCE OF CENTRAL CONTROL AND A RATHER CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED PACE. WHILE THE MEDIA ATTACKS HAVE GROWN STEADILY IN THEIR INTENSITY, THE FOCUS HAS REMAINED NARROW,  
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CONCENTRATING ON TENG AND A HANDFUL OF OTHERS. MOST ARTICLES

DEALING WITH THE STRUGGLE HAVE REPEATED MAO'S DICTUM ON "CURING THE ILLNESS TO SAVE THE PATIENT" AND INDICATED THAT THOSE WHO SINCERELY REPENT CAN SAVE THEMSELVES. TENG'S OPPONENTS HAVE CLEARLY DOMINATED THE MEDIA, AND THE NOMINAL LEFT HAS MAINTAINED A GENERALLY HIGH PROFILE WHILE OLDER, MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE POLITBURO HAVE TENDED TO REMAIN OUT OF SIGHT. LINKING THIS CAMPAIGN TO THE DEBATES ON EDUCATION AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, THE PRIMARY FOCUS HAS BEEN ON THE UNIVERSITIES, BUT THUS FAR THERE HAVE BEEN FAIRLY CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT CULTURAL-REVOLUTION-STYLE STUDENT GROUPS ARE NOT AUTHORIZED. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN SOME TENTATIVE INDICATIONS OF INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMPAIGN BY THE PLA, THUS FAR THE MILITARY HAS MAINTAINED A LOW PROFILE, AND THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE PLA LEADERSHIP MAY BE EXERCISING A RESTRAINING ROLE ON THE CAMPAIGN. MASS PARTICIPATION IN THE MOVEMENT SEEMS RATHER LUKEWARM AND CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED.

### 3. THE ISSUES

WHILE THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE THUS FAR HAS TENDED TO CENTER ON PERSONALITIES AND PARTICULARLY THE IDEOLOGICAL DEVIATION OF TENG HSIAO-PING, UNDERLYING ALL OF THESE DISCUSSIONS ARE QUESTIONS OF POLICY FOR CHINA'S FUTURE. THE QUALITY AND DEGREE OF POLITIZATION OF EDUCATION, THE CULTURAL REALM AND THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL CONTROL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ARE ONLY SOME OF THE POLICY ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE DEBATE. ECONOMIC ISSUES ARE LESS CLEARLY IDENTIFIED, BUT MAY INVOLVE THE NEW FIVE-YEAR PLAN AND HOW IT IS TO BE IMPLEMENTED, MILITARY PRIORITIES AND DEFENSE SPENDING, AND THE IMPORT OF FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY. IN ADDITION, THERE IS CLEARLY A GENERATIONAL QUESTION INVOLVING A POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE ESTABLISHED OLD GUARD AND A RISING GENERATION OF YOUNGER LEADERS, MANY OF WHOM EMERGED DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. ON THE IDEOLOGICAL PLANE, A LITERAL READING OF RECENT MATERIALS ATTACKING TENG HSIAO-PING ALSO CLEARLY INDICATES MAO'S CONCERN FOR THOSE CHINESE LEADERS WHO, HAVING MADE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS DURING THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION, HAVE FAILED TO ADVANCE IN THEIR THINKING TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE DURING

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THE SOCIALIST PERIOD.

### 4. UNCERTAINTIES

AT THIS STAGE THERE ARE NO CLEAR INDICATORS OF THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE TWO SIDES IN THE STRUGGLE. WHILE CONTROL OF THE MEDIA HAS GIVEN THE LEFT THE APPEARANCE OF BEING ON THE OFFENSIVE, IT MAY BE THAT THE CONTROL EXERCISED OVER THE

CAMPAIGN THUS FAR IS A RESULT OF BEHIND-THE-SCENE MANEUVERING BY TENG AND HIS SUPPORTERS. ANOTHER UNCERTAINTY IS THE POTENTIAL SCOPE OF ATTACK. AS NOTED ABOVE, THE CAMPAIGN HAS REMAINED RATHER NARROWLY FOCUSED, BUT OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS TENG HSIAO-PING HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING BACK INTO POSITIONS OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY POWER A WIDE RANGE OF HIS FELLOW CULTURAL REVOLUTION VICTIMS. ALTHOUGH THE CHINESE HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO REASSURE FOREIGNERS THAT THERE WILL BE NO EFFECT IN ECONOMIC AND FOREIGN POLICY SPHERES AND WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE FUNDAMENTAL POLICY SHIFTS, MASS CAMPAIGNS IN THE PAST INEVITABLY HAVE RESULTED IN AN INCREASE OF CHINESE XENOPHOBIA AND A TEMPORARY DISRUPTION OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION.

#### 5. FUTURE COURSE OF THE CAMPAIGN

DEVELOPMENTS THUS FAR SUGGEST THREE POSSIBLE FUTURE COURSES FOR THE CAMPAIGN.

(A) THE DEPARTURE OF CHOU EN-LAI FROM THE SCENE AND THE INTENSITY OF ATTACKS ON TENG HSIAO-PING SUGGESTS THE POSSIBILITY THAT CHINA MAY HAVE ENTERED A FULL-SCALE SUCCESSION STRUGGLE. IF THIS IS THE CASE, WE COULD NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER UPHEAVAL ON THE SCALE OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. ALTHOUGH A NUMBER OF FACTORS MILITATE AGAINST THIS POSSIBILITY, INCLUDING A GREATLY INTENSIFIED SOVIET THREAT, THE COURSE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE POWER STRUGGLE COULD LEAD TO THIS RESULT INDEPENDENT OF THE CALCULATIONS OR DESIRES OF EITHER FACTION.

(B) THE CAMPAIGN MAY BE WHAT THE CHINESE SAY IT IS, LITERALLY A POLITICAL STRUGGLE BETWEEN TWO LINES, A UNIQUELY CHINESE/MAOIST FORM OF DEMOCRACY. WE WILL BE READING THE PUBLISHED MATERIALS ON THE CAMPAIGN AND ATTEMPTING TO EVALUATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POSTER ATTACKS WITH THIS POSSIBILITY IN CONFIDENTIAL

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MIND.

(C) FINALLY, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THIS CAMPAIGN, LIKE THE OTHERS THAT HAVE PRECEDED IT IN RECENT YEARS, WILL PROCEED IN FITS AND STARTS - AND EVENTUALLY WITHER AWAY INCONCLUSIVELY. SHOULD THIS HAPPEN, IT WOULD SUGGEST A FAIRLY HIGH DEGREE OF CONTROL BY THE CURRENT POWERHOLDERS AND WOULD PROBABLY LEAVE THE POLITICAL BALANCE IN CHINA BASICALLY UNCHANGED.

#### 6. INDICATORS

AS THE CAMPAIGN EVOLVES, WE WILL BE WATCHING THE FOLLOWING VARIABLES FOR CLUES AS TO PROBABLE FUTRE DEVELOPMENTS.

(A) AN INDICATOR OF RELATIVE STRENGTH AND OF THE DEGREE

OF POTENTIAL DISRUPTION WILL BE THE EXTENT OF MASS PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMPAIGN. IN THIS REGARD, THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THE 1974 CAMPAIGN TO CRITICIZE LIN PIAO AND CONFUCIUS MAY BE A GOOD POINT OF COMPARISON.

(B) ALTHOUGH YAO WEN-YUAN HAS BEEN REPORTED AS SAYING THAT THERE ARE TO BE NO "FIGHTING GROUPS" FORMED AND THE PEOPLE'S DAILY HAS ADMONISHED AGAINST "EXCHANGING EXPERIENCES," THERE HAS ALREADY BEEN LIMITED TRAVEL BETWEEN STUDENTS FROM PEKING AND SHANGHAI. SHOULD THIS PRACTICE DEVELOP FURTHER OR SHOULD THE RESTRICTIONS ON FORMING LIAISON UNITS WEAKEN, THIS WOULD INDICATE A DETERIORATION OF PARTY CONTROL OVER THE CAMPAIGN AND SUGGEST INCREASING DIFFICULTY FOR TENG AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

(C) THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE MOVEMENT IS BROADENED IN AN ATTEMPT TO TOPPLE PARTY AND MILITARY FIGURES ASSOCIATED WITH TENG HSIAO-PING WILL ALSO BE AN IMPORTANT GAUGE OF THE POTENTIAL FOR DISRUPTION, ALTHOUGH AGAIN IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT THE POSTER CAMPAIGN DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 1974 CRITICIZED A WIDE RANGE OF PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS BEFORE IT EVAPORATED.

(D) THE FORMATION OF FACTIONAL GROUPS HAS NORMALLY BEEN A PART OF MAJOR IDEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGNS IN CHINA. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS PRACTICE IS TOLERATED OR CONTROLLED WILL OFFER CLUES CONCERNING THE RELATIVE BALANCE OF STRENGTH IN THE PROVINCES.

(E) OBVIOUSLY THE PLA WILL BE A CRITICAL FACTOR BOTH IN  
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THE POWER EQUATION AND IN MAINTAINING STABILITY. THUS FAR THERE HAS BEEN VERY LIMITED PARTICIPATION BY PLA UNITS IN THE CAMPAIGN. ANY CHANGE IN THIS SITUATION WILL BE SIGNIFICANT.

(\*) ECONOMIC ISSUES, SUCH AS PROPAGANDA RELATED TO SPRING PLANTING, INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION AND THE IMPORT OF FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY WILL OFFER SIGNS OF THE CAMPAIGN'S DIRECTION. IF WE SEE AN INCREASING NUMBER OF ARTICLES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASED PRODUCTION WHILE GIVING LIP SERVICE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASS STRUGGLE, IT WILL BE A STRONG INDICATION THAT THE STRUGGLE IS UNDER CONTROL AND PROBABLY DIMINISHING.

7. WE WILL BE TAKING A LOOK AT THE ISSUES UNDER DEBATE IN THE CAMPAIGN AS THEY HAVE EMERGED TO DATE AND WILL REPORT ON THEM SEPTTEL.

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